Minister's April 18, 2003 initiative, and as a part of the step-by-step process to normalize diplomatic and other relations with Pakistan, India, on 23 September 2003, proposed to Pakistan an increase in the staff strength of the respective High Commission by eight on a reciprocal basis. Pakistan has agreed to the Indian proposal. As a result, the revised strength of the respective High Commissions will become 55 (fifty five).

Attacks on Indian students in Russia

1784. SHRI K.B. KRISHNA MURTHY: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Indian students community affected by the dormitory fire at the Patric Lumumba University in Moscow had complained of the callous attitude of the Indian Embassy officials in Moscow;

(b) whether Government are aware of the increasing incidence of racial attacks by Russian skinheads; and

(c) if so, what steps are being taken to ensure safety of Indian community in Russia?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): (a) A number of Indian students of Patric Lumumba University called on Indian diplomats and Ambassador at the Embassy of India in Moscow on 27 November 2003 to apprise them of the difficulties being faced by those Indian students who were affected by the fire which broke out in Hostel number 6 of the University in Moscow on 24 November 2003.

(b) and (c) the Embassy of India in Moscow has consistently raised the issue of attacks by skinheads on foreign nationals, including Indians, which are brought to its notice, with Russian authorities in a sustained manner. As a result of these efforts, action taken by the Russian authorities against miscreants and adoption of precautionary measures, there has been a reduction in such incidents in 2003, as compared to 2002. The Government of India continues to engage the concerned Russian authorities through the Indian Embassy in Moscow on this issue.